



Task Force for the creation of the Inter-Agency Permanent Observatory on counterfeiting

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UNICRI Headquarters

Introduction

By Mr.Sandro Calvani, UNICRI Director

Honoured guests, ladies and gentlemen, Good morning.

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the Task Force for the creation of the Inter-Agency Permanent Observatory on counterfeiting (IPO/c). I am gratified by your interest to this initiative and hope you find this discussion fruitful, particularly in terms of expanding knowledge on improved synergies among public and private actors to fight against counterfeiting.

UNICRI is a very dynamic institute. We had no previous experience in counterfeiting and with a small budget and only one year time we produced our Report. It contains a series of recommendations that we are now trying to put into practice with the IPO/c.

We are able to obtain very good results with limited staff and in short time, we already have an IPO. It is the IPO on Security during Major Events, which is now supporting China for the Olympic Games and already supported the organization of other big events, for example in Russia (2006 G8 summit) and in Germany (2007 G8 summit).

Counterfeiting is a constantly expanding criminal activity and it entails serious consequences for the entire society. Let me briefly underline few outstanding aspects of a phenomenon that we are all here to resolutely tackle.

First of all, counterfeiting is the 21st century golden mine for organized criminals. Attracted by the huge profits and the low risks which are connected with counterfeiting, not only ordinary criminals but organized crime is undoubtedly involved. It is, in fact, an immense source of profits ready to be reinvested in other illegal areas. It also serves as a mean to easily launder money deriving from other crimes. Transnational organized crime is today the manager of the production and distribution of the so called “Fakes”.

Another dangerous aspect is the fact that counterfeiting is often considered as a second class crime or as a victimless crime. This attitude is not only spread among the law enforcers but is also common among the majority of the general public. Both of them are not always aware of the risks created by counterfeiting. Counterfeiting makes its own victims. We clearly highlighted it in our Report. Victims are connected with the numerous negative consequences which derive from its perpetration. Economic consequences are suffered by producers and by Governments.

But the most worrying aspect is the one related to the health and safety of consumers. Counterfeiters replicate almost every product, especially those that are more profitable in consequence of their market share or of their selling price. But some of these products could be extremely dangerous if the production safety standards are not respected

The international community strongly needs a global and integrated strategy to counter the diffusion of this crime. Counterfeiting is too widespread and involves too many different legal and social aspects to believe that it could be stopped by a single country alone or by a single International Organization alone.

UNICRI considers coordination and cooperation the pillars upon which we can build an effective strategy. We are all here today because all the different sectors affected by counterfeiting must be involved. We must share our experience and knowledge. We must support the diffusion of good practices which have proven to be successful and their application to different sectors.

UNICRI operates in selected niches as a ‘laboratory of ideas’ and its activities help the integration of national and international efforts to search for good practices and adapt them to different national situations. During our everyday increasingly committed work towards the fight against this crime, we have clearly felt the need for a new and more comprehensive approach.

As I said above, the research project conducted last year by UNICRI identified some priorities and formulated a list of recommendations. Our strong commitment resulted in the elaboration of the IPO/c. The IPO/c will constitute an action and result oriented common platform to combat counterfeiting and piracy. It will enhance cooperation and create added value to the specific competences and expertise of the involved organizations and individuals.

Action is the keyword and an important goal for any consultation.

Thanks to the creation of a roster of experts covering different fields of activity – from training and awareness for law enforcers to customs cooperation, from technology transfer to the planning of awareness campaigns for the general public – the IPO/c will be ready to quickly act in case of need, facilitating and accelerating the response to any request of intervention and assistance in specific areas. Instead of being merely a forum for discussion, the IPO/c will represent a unique point of reference to be consulted in various cases of need as: the organization and delivery of trainings or the planning and realization of awareness raising campaigns.

Moreover, the IPO/c will permanently monitor on a daily basis the evolution of the phenomenon and of its social, criminal and economic aspects.

The objective is to:

- reduce the impact of counterfeiting
- enhance the response of the law enforcement authorities
- raise the awareness regarding the involvement of organized and the serious threats that counterfeit goods pose for the public health and safety of citizens, for producers and for the global economic circuit.

The IPO/c aims at involving both the private and the public sectors, creating a proactive partnership and alliance among stakeholders to fight counterfeiting and piracy.

The pillars that will lead the functioning of the IPO/c and upon which its operational capacity will be built are:

- facilitating an improved and efficient cooperation
- avoiding duplications and unneeded wasting of time and resources
- enhancing the specific competences of organizations and individuals
- concretely supporting the realization of specific strategies in a given sector or political/social/economic context, through the creation of a set of services.

Without cooperation and coordination we cannot defeat this crime. It is too widespread and it involves too many sectors of activity. If we do not cooperate we miss the chance to enrich our point of view with the knowledge and experience deriving from those people and those organizations that are already fighting this crime.

Once again, dear colleagues, thank you for your participation and your support to the work of my Institute. I wish for all of us a productive day of work.